xiii). Holding such views, the author perhaps can be excused from resisting the temptation to place Perry in a more dispassionate context.

The book lacks both footnotes and bibliography, and thus is of little value to serious scholars. Dillon did read earlier biographies of Perry, notably that of Alexander MacKenzie, published in the 1840s, and worked with the Perry papers (evidenced by too-extensive quotations from the commodore's correspondence). He shows no evidence of having read Theodore Roosevelt's or Alfred Thayer Mahan's works on the naval war of 1812, or the more recent study of Reginald Horsman, The War of 1812, which is the best one-volume treatment extant. This is much to be regretted, for Perry deserves a good biographer. Dillon, with a deserved reputation as a historian of California and the West, would have been better advised to stick to the area he knows best. Finally, the absence of illustrations and diagrams of the Battle of Lake Erie makes it difficult for the average reader to follow the engagement. The first fifty pages of Samuel Eliot Morison's "Old Bruin": Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, are far more enlightening on the subject of Oliver Hazard Perry and his remarkable family. Surely the field of naval history has outgrown hagiographic studies of the "drum and trumpet" school.

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Jefferson Davis's name is among the most familiar in American history. At the same time, he is one of the least understood men in the nation's past. He has been praised as the heroic figure who kept the Confederacy alive long after it was doomed, yet he has often been openly blamed for the Southern defeat. Each year, sections of the South still celebrate his birthday and his descendants meet to eulogize his memory, but at the same time most Southerners ignore both events. In the United States Congress, a body Davis belonged to but resigned from when secession came, a movement has finally restored United States citizenship to him. Apparently unknown to Congress, Davis would oppose such legislation were he alive today. His concept
of honor would never have allowed him to renounce the Confederacy and rejoin the United States.

A historical figure of such complex reputation requires a talented biographer. Clement Eaton, the distinguished professor emeritus of the University of Kentucky and a longtime student of the American South, has undertaken the difficult task of attempting to shed some light on the Davis enigma. Since there are no acceptable biographies of Davis, Eaton's work is a welcome addition to American historiography. This book does not provide all the answers about the Confederate president, but it is the most objective account of him yet printed.

In attempting to unravel the mystery of the man sometimes called "The Sphinx of the Confederacy," Eaton recognizes the difficulties of his task at the book's beginning, valiantly struggles with his complicated subject in the middle, and presents some conclusions at the end. The resulting portrait reveals a man of both talent and weakness. Eaton argues that "the key to the riddle of Davis's self-defeating personality, may well have been an invincible pride — far beyond that of ordinary individuals — that was closely associated in his mind with the notion of honor" (p. 273). Still, Eaton concludes, as others have before him, that Davis was the best available Southerner for the job of Confederate president. But he stops short of calling Davis a good president; in fact this biography indicates just the opposite. Davis, like the Confederacy he led (whose shortcomings this book continually emphasizes), made numerous mistakes which, Eaton hints, may have determined the outcome of the Civil War.

Several aspects of this book are debatable. Eaton's discussion of slavery reflects his total acceptance of the Time on the Cross arguments now rejected by most historians. (Calling historian Kenneth M. Stampp a "neo-abolitionist" [p. 42] is one example of this adherence to Fogel and Engerman.) Throughout the book, too, phrases and sentences jar the readers' sensibilities: e.g., "But the feminine side of her [Varina Davis's] nature was balanced by a serious interest in politics and intellectual subjects" (p. 27); in describing Richmond Examiner editor John M. Daniel, Eaton writes that he had "a Jewish looking face"; regarding Davis's 1850 expansionist ideas, Eaton concludes: "The necessity of ruling semi-tropical possessions with their ignorant populations, could have contaminated the purity of American institutions and weakened democracy in the United States" (p. 107).

The book also has other weaknesses. Eaton presents more of a
history of the Confederacy than a biography of its president. Disappointingly, too, he handles Davis's life after 1865 in a chapter too brief to be very thorough or illuminating. Despite the efforts of a renowned historian, then, the "sphinx" retains much of his mystery and awaits another biographer's efforts.

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This book is brought to you by the authors who have master-minded other historical farces into moneymaking operations. Among their credits are "In Search of Noah's Ark," "The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams," and "Chariots of the Gods" (produced by Sellier). Their company, Schick Sunn Classic Books, also published Bigfoot: The Mysterious Monster. They have found a formula for producing television scripts (the basis of their books) that raise mystifying questions and tease the audiences with unsubstantiated explanations. They are as close to the truth as the old horror films of the 1940s, such as Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein. But Balsiger and Sellier commit an unforgivable offense by attempting to endow their stories with scholarly attribution. They claim that "the investigation had a highly sophisticated and scientific side" (p. 9). This includes missing persons bureaus, psychological stress evaluators, toxicology tests, and special infrared and ultraviolet photography. To whom and to what these tests were administered, and for what reasons, the authors never say.

The authors' qualifications as objective scholars to undertake a reassessment of the conspiracy against President Lincoln are suspect. They are scriptwriters and producers for Sunn Classic Pictures which they argue "is the second largest family entertainment motion picture company in the world" (p. 319). Balsiger is a graduate of National University (a vocational and business-oriented school), but neither has had the training or experience to be a research scholar.

Their handling of evidence reveals how inadequate they are as scholars. For example, they claim to have used eighteen missing pages